

From PDS Classroom Teachers to Urban Teacher Educators: Learning From Professional Development School Boundary Spanners

Teresa R. Fisher, Georgia State University

Joyce E. Many, Georgia State University

ABSTRACT: This qualitative inquiry explores perceptions and experiences of three urban educators who had been involved in PDS initiatives both from the school perspective as classroom teachers and mentors to interns and from the university perspective as urban teacher-educators. These “boundary spanners” provided insight into and appreciation for the complexity of teacher education and in-service teacher support within Professional Development School initiatives because their knowledge and expertise spanned both contexts. Specifically, these educators worked to (a) extend the mentor teacher/university supervisor relationship, (b) construct learning communities, (c) integrate academic knowledge and clinical practice, and (d) challenge the partnership to become mutually supportive and beneficial. This inquiry expands upon the notion of boundary spanners to consider ways in which their situated knowledge and experience can foster innovative practices in teacher preparation and field-based support structures, benefiting not only teacher candidates but also practicing teachers and pupils.

PDS “Essentials” Addressed: #1/A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community; #2/A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community; #3/Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need; #4/A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants; #5/Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants; #7/A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration; #8/Work by college/university faculty and P–12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; #9/Dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structures.

Introduction

Recent literature on teacher education reform has stressed the importance of consistency between teacher education programs and K-12 classrooms where interns and practicing teachers work (AACTE, 2010; Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005). One approach to addressing inconsistencies between universities and schools has been the establishment of Professional Development Schools (PDS). In these contexts, PDS teachers and university faculty assume joint responsibility for pre-service and in-service teacher development with the aim of improving student achievement (Holmes Group, 1986; Shroyer, Yahnke, & Heller, 2007). This clinical teacher education model addresses calls for teacher preparation programs to build strong conceptual links between coursework, field experiences, and teaching practices (NCATE, 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). In PDS sites, the importance of cooperating teachers' contributions to helping interns connect theories, academic preparation, and classroom realities is recognized. This recognition is an issue stressed in the literature on the preparation of teachers in general (Ariail, Dooley, Swars, & Smith, 2011) and the literature on the development of literacy educators in particular (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; Snow et al., 2005).

PDS models have been adopted by many teacher education programs as a way of integrating teacher candidate preparation, teacher professional development, and inquiry with an emphasis on increasing student achievement and on simultaneous renewal of faculties at both sites (NCATE, 2001; Neapolitan & Tunks, 2009). The urban institution that is the focus of this article has embraced the concept of working collaboratively with public schools using the PDS concept (Bohan & Many, 2011). The College of Education's PDS network consists of 24 schools in six school districts in a

metropolitan area. In addition to field placements in these PDS sites, the university recruits partner schools across eighteen school systems and in private day care settings and charter schools. A concerted effort has been made to place students in high-need schools. In 2011–2012, 66% of student teachers were placed in schools where more than 50% of children were eligible for free or reduced meals and 72% of student teachers were in schools where minority students made up more than 60% of the school population. This college's teacher education programs make over 2,000 placements a year and produce over 500 new teachers across elementary, middle grades, secondary, and P-12 levels annually.

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to explore perceptions and experiences of three urban educators who had been involved in this PDS initiative both (a) from the school perspective as classroom teachers and mentors to interns and (b) from the university perspective as urban teacher educators. Because their knowledge and expertise spanned both contexts, these individuals were able to provide insight into and appreciation for the complexity of teacher education and in-service teacher support within a PDS initiative.

Previous research indicates PDSs involve collaborations across institutions with distinct missions, organizational structures, and cultures that may conflict at times (Breault & Breault, 2010; Sanheltz & Finan, 1990). The differing missions and purposes of PDS partners may result in collaborators from these two contexts encountering hidden barriers or incongruent perspectives (Stevens, 1999). The key to improving education and educational partnerships in such situations is to facilitate mutual understanding of participants and to find strategies to bridge differences. In successful PDSs, partners are able to span boundaries such that relationships between professional educators involved are strengthened (Howey & Zimpher, 2006). The three participants for this study served as

facilitators in this regard, providing important linkages across public school and university contexts. Stevens (1999) describes such PDS participants as *boundary spanners*, noting that they commute both figuratively and literally across public school and university boundaries.

Founded in organizational theory, a boundary spanner was conceptualized as one who provides important links between organizations and environments where they are situated (White & Dozier, 1992). Due to their ability to speak the languages and discourses of both contexts, they are able to bring new meanings to the surface by interpreting behaviors, events, people, and information for internal and external audiences (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; White & Dozier, 1992). In schools, boundary spanners provide guidance for understanding cultural differences, work to create bridges across diverse perspectives, and act as change agents in helping to implement educational policies (Buxton, Carlone, & Carlone, 2005; Honig, 2006). Such individuals play crucial roles in helping school-university partners understand each others' orientations and values so effective relationships are created and maintained (Collay, 1995; Many, Fisher, Ogletree, & Taylor, 2012; Many, Fisher, Taylor & Benson, 2011; Sanheltz & Finan, 1990). Because their knowledge and experiences cross contextual borders of schools, communities, and academia, boundary spanners are able to extend traditional relations through enhanced interpersonal skills, trust, and connectedness (Miller, 2008; Stevens, 1999).

This inquiry specifically expands upon the notion of boundary spanners to consider ways their situated knowledge and experience can be particularly informative in making innovations in practices in teacher preparation that benefit not only candidates, but also practicing teachers and pupils being served in PDS classrooms. We were interested in exploring the unique perspectives and insights of PDS classroom teachers who had joined our faculty

to work in urban teacher education. As a result, this inquiry was designed to address the following questions: What are the experiences and practices of these teacher educators who have crossed institutional boundaries? What are their perceptions of ways to improve pre-service and in-service teacher development?

Methodology

This qualitative inquiry focused on understanding personal reflections and artifacts from three key informants. In the sections that follow, we describe our participants and our methods of collecting and analyzing data.

Participants

Participants for this study were purposefully selected boundary spanners with (a) school-based and university-based experiences within our PDS network and (b) significant involvement teaching diverse learners in urban contexts. Participants included three former PDS teachers who joined the university faculty to work as literacy/ESOL teacher educators. Each key informant is introduced below along with a description of her prior role in a PDS, the nature of her involvement in PDS work at that site, and her current responsibilities in teacher education.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis occurred iteratively in four stages: (a) initial interviews, (b) written debriefings, (c) syllabus think-alouds, and (d) member checking. In the first stage, initial interviews of approximately 1 to 1½ hours in length were conducted with each participant. Using the following questions, we asked informants to discuss their changing roles in PDSs:

- How would you describe the roles that you have served in PDS schools?
- How did your experiences in one role shape your view of the later role?
- What factors led to you moving from one context to the other?
- Have your purposes/visions/values/concerns in the PDS initiatives changed as you moved from one context to the other? Why?
- Does your orientation seem to be different from colleagues in your new context because of your experiences in your previous role?
- What do you feel about the overall movement toward preparing teachers in PDSs?
- What do you feel about the effectiveness of the PDS initiatives with which you have been involved?
- What would your recommendations be to improve the overall PDS model or specific initiatives?

After these initial interviews, data were analyzed using a constant-comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This process involved open coding in which all interview transcriptions were read to identify emerging categories. As a result of our open coding process, we developed working hypotheses related to the ways these participants' experiences as boundary spanners may have shaped their course assignments and their interactions with interns and cooperating teachers. As a second data source, participants commented on descriptions of the primary themes. This written debriefing process provided a space for participants to not only confirm or elaborate on initial findings but also clarify intentions and understandings.

For our third round of data collection, participants selected syllabi from pre-service and in-service courses that they had taught within the last four years and which they felt were informed by their perspectives as boundary spanners. Subsequent think-aloud interviews with each participant focused on

describing ways their approaches to designing and teaching those courses were impacted by their views as former PDS teachers. This procedure was consistent with an introspection and retrospection framework (Scarion, 2005) in that participants were asked to reconsider their course syllabi in an effort to make visible the thinking involved in organizing their approach to their course.

Specifically, participants described the syllabi and discussed ways that experiences as classroom teachers shaped and informed planning, designing, and teaching of the course (including activities facilitated and their interactions with students), and feedback offered. Additional data were then analyzed to reconsider initial categories and to further refine and understand relationships across themes. Using an axial coding approach, patterns were examined across data from key informants and triangulated across data sources (Bogdan & Biklin, 2007). Once final themes were established, we returned to participants for member checks to ensure that their stories and experiences had been accurately depicted and to verify our interpretations and the credibility of our findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1995).

Results

Analyses across these teacher educators indicated that participants' partnership experiences were both unique and complex. In the sections that follow, we first introduce each boundary spanner and describe her experiences in each context, and next we present themes emerging from our analyses across cases.

Profiles and Experiences of Boundary Spanners

During the first year of the PDS partnership, Nubia, Stacey, and Judy (pseudonyms) taught in linguistically and culturally diverse first-

and second-grade multiage classrooms. The three colleagues met during their master's program where they focused on language and literacy development for diverse learners in urban contexts. Nubia and Stacey came to work with Judy in the Language and Literacy Acquisition Program she piloted at her PDS site to support newly arrived immigrant children simultaneously developing literacy and English proficiency. This pilot and the collaboration between the three of them was a fruitful learning endeavor.

As classroom teachers in this PDS elementary site, each participant mentored interns from the undergraduate early childhood teacher preparation program, supporting them in their understanding of and ability to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students. In spite of working in a PDS site and actively supporting pre-service teacher interns, participants acknowledged that teaching in a PDS site during the beginning years of the partnership had limited implications for their own pedagogy and vocational development.

After having taught as classroom teachers, ESOL instructors, and literacy teachers for between five and seven years, the three of them received full-time fellowships from the university and began working toward doctoral degrees in teaching and learning with concentrations in language and literacy education. As doctoral students, they participated in a longitudinal research collaboration at a different PDS site that had a significant impact on the writing pedagogy of a small number of teachers. As graduate teaching assistants, they also had close connections to PDS sites as instructors in clinically-based programs. Each was informed by their participation in the contexts of both the university and the public school during and after their doctoral fellowships.

Nubia engaged in rich and extensive traversing across the university/public school boundary, supporting in-service teachers, pupils, and teacher candidates. In her

university-based work, she taught and supervised interns in a PDS elementary site, created and taught field-based literacy courses in the context of that school, and offered tailored professional development to in-service teachers who had been school-based colleagues. After her doctoral fellowship was completed she began teaching ESOL in a linguistically and culturally diverse urban elementary school and serving as a part-time literacy instructor working with provisionally certified teachers in the university's early childhood education Master's of Arts in Teaching program. Her interviews and debriefs belied the belief that the partnership should benefit and support in-service teachers in PDS sites in significant and meaningful ways. She believed that the role of university experience and initiative should be manifested in meaningful coaching relationships with teachers to support their pedagogical inquiries. While she saw great potential in the theory of PDS partnerships, she was less than convinced that our partnerships are as advantageous to schools, in-service teachers, and pupils as they are to universities. In her reflections, she considered possibilities for a more authentic mutual commitment of support.

Through Stacey's work in the university as a teaching fellow, in her later roles as the ESOL coordinator for the undergraduate teacher preparation program in early childhood education, and via her role as a language and literacy professor, she supported teacher candidates as their instructor for their methods courses in Language and Literacy and by supervising/mentoring the interns as they worked with English Learners in schools. She felt strongly that her experiences navigating the socio-political contexts of her own teaching offered her a range of perspectives and insights that informed pedagogical decisions in her university-based teaching life. Throughout interviews and debriefs, Stacey noted the critical need to learn to collaborate with and create meaningful relationships with

other adults in each context. Her core values of providing meaningful tools and strategies to teachers (in-service and pre-service alike) and of creating opportunities for increased professionalization and capacity to collaborate in respectful ways remained a critical construct. Additionally, Stacey placed substantial emphasis on the importance of supporting pre-service and in-service teachers in the practice of assessment that would inform instruction. These characteristics not only framed her discussion of values but also were evidenced in her curriculum design for urban pre-service teachers.

In her university-based work, Judy served as coordinator and instructor of field-based ESOL and reading endorsement programs for PDS teachers in partner districts, assisted Nubia in her field-based methods course, and supervised student teachers who were working with her school-based colleagues. Her perspectives regarding the possibilities of partnerships were influenced significantly by field-based coaching opportunities. As Judy returned to the PDS where she originally taught young children to coach and support candidates enrolled in her university courses, she found herself working alongside in-service teachers who had been her close colleagues. The result was the creation of spaces where triads (consisting of Judy, one of her in-service colleagues, and one of her pre-service teachers) learned together and reconsidered possibilities for practice. After completing her doctoral degree, her subsequent role as a faculty member coordinating the early childhood education Master's of Arts in Teaching program did not include traditional partnerships since teachers in the program were provisionally certified and practicing in a range of urban schools. However, she still contended that many of her practices were informed by these boundary-crossing experiences. Evidenced in her discussion and syllabi were complex roles of learning and teaching, the need for developing pre-service and in-service teachers as reflective practitioners, and

emphases on parental involvement, funds of knowledge, community based learning, and advocacy.

In examining multiple data sources, there were four primary themes that framed the discourse of Nubia, Stacey, and Judy. Specifically, these individuals shared four dispositional and ideological stances inherent in their work with in-service and pre-service literacy teachers: (a) extending the mentor teacher/ university supervisor relationship, (b) constructing learning communities, (c) integrating academic knowledge and clinical practice, and (d) challenging the partnership to become mutually supportive and beneficial.

Extending the Mentor Teacher/ University Supervisor Relationship

These urban teacher educators felt strongly about the contribution and value of mentor teachers. Therefore, in their work in schools, they strove not only to support the development of pre-service teachers but also engage in supportive relationships with in-service school partners. They spoke about the need for "authentic relationships" with mentor teachers and providing "tangible support" (Stacey, interview). Judy explained, "I feel like it's very important that, as the supervisor, I create relationships with the collaborating teachers... I'm there to serve as a resource, an assistant, a conversation partner to the collaborating teacher as well" (initial interview). This re-imagining included recognizing that both members of the student teacher and mentor teacher dyad needed to be validated, supported, and encouraged. Nubia stated, "I think it is our responsibility to make our work together beneficial to the [mentor] teacher and...benefit the [mentor] teacher's practice and give them at least one idea they can use in their immediate context" (Think Aloud).

Deconstructing traditional outsider and evaluative roles of university supervisors and

claiming a more inclusive and responsive role toward mentor teachers was a fundamental part of the work these teacher educators claimed for themselves in schools. Nubia, in her field-based literacy course teaching, was actually provided entrée into classrooms of two struggling beginning in-service teachers so that her work collaborating with pre-service teachers around reading and writing development could not only support learners in these classrooms but also serve as a model of the possible for classroom teachers she supported through this inclusion practice. Judy stated that one challenge for teachers is they are often isolated and do not have people to share ideas, deconstruct classroom practices, and collaboratively consider and enact possibilities. She believed that her relationships with teachers in the PDS were particularly meaningful as the trust had been long before established. She believed that

without that point of personal connection and experience I believe we do not have the type of credibility to build collaborative relationships or to be seen by teachers as individuals who are grounded enough in the “realities of teaching” that we can “get it” enough to be of any substantive help. (Debriefing interview).

Obviously, teachers who had worked alongside the participants when those individuals were in the school as elementary classroom teachers knew just how grounded in practice and in this specific PDS context these boundary spanners were.

Stacey, remembering the importance of her own relationships with university faculty when she was a classroom teacher, shared that she had come to realize “how having that connection with [university faculty] and getting support is so important for [teacher] confidence.” She further believed that “anything you can do for classroom teachers that kind of puts them up and reinforces the fact that they really do know a lot and that

learning new things is always going to be beneficial really does reinvigorate them.” She felt that the partnership with classroom teachers needed to not only offer learning experiences to in-service teachers, but also honor and build upon expertise that they most certainly had to share.

This disposition toward supporting not only the pre-service teachers placed in classrooms but also the in-service teacher was emphasized by these boundary spanners who considered their responsibility to both members of the student teaching/mentor teacher dyad. This stemmed from their experiences as mentors and from their personal and professional appreciation of individuals who were serving as mentors to their students. These urban teacher educators recognized and valued “the generous contribution of...time, experience, and leadership that [mentor teachers] offer as they support our interns” (Judy, Written Debrief).

Constructing Learning Communities

A second theme evident in our boundary spanners’ data reflected an emphasis on constructing learning communities. The establishment of meaningful relationships with both pre-service and in-service teachers provided these teacher educators with an opportunity to engage collaboratively with individuals in meaningful inquiry and reflective dialogue about issues of practice.

Stacey, Nubia, and Judy all created structures in their coursework that emphasized and supported learning in community. Stacey expressed that all of us (second graders, teachers, and teacher educators alike) should have a bit of humor and “remember that it’s okay to make mistakes and to talk about our biases and our issues and that we’re all still learning.” Stacey further stated that “is important as a teacher to learn how to work with your colleagues and talk and get into discussions, engage in what you are doing and

always look at yourself as a learner” (Stacey, Think Aloud).

Stacey created opportunities in coursework for teacher candidates to practice “talking to other adults. . . [and] realizing that is also a part of being a teacher. Just that it’s really about sharing. [Teachers] have to share resources and activities that other people try to learn and use” (Think Aloud). She explained that in each course she created opportunities for collaboration as a critical aspect of professionalism. Nubia included in her field-based literacy course opportunities for pre-service teachers to work in pairs as they supported the reading and writing development of diverse first graders. The pre-service teachers in her course:

went into first grade as partners and worked with a small group [of students]. . . The reason I put two of them together was just because of the [need to] learn to be with someone else, learning to work with someone else, learning to work as a team, and the reflective process to try and get them to talk, and to do what [I] did [with Judy and Stacey]. (Think aloud)

Teacher study groups were critical aspects of the work of both Nubia and Judy. Nubia led in-service teacher development as a consultant in their PDS site, working with school-based colleagues on questions of pedagogy and practice ranging from writer’s workshop, to additive language, to funds of knowledge and culturally relevant curriculum. In her initial interview, Nubia said,

I think it’s really important if you’re a teacher, you need to consistently learn. . . you’re teaching kids to learn, you should be learning too. So when you [engage in community-based learning] with other people you can talk with, you [have opportunities to] know and reflect. . . You’re not going

to get better if you don’t try and figure stuff out. (Initial Interview)

Similarly, Judy collaborated with teacher study groups in two PDS sites. In-service teachers in these teacher study groups engaged in a complex process of inquiry and change. This process included identifying issues and concerns in their communities and collaboratively conducting research alongside other school-based colleagues, considering literature about complexities they encountered, reading legislation, articulating a position or possibility for school or community-based change, and putting into place the beginnings of those changes. Reflecting on her work, Judy clarified that some teachers worked to “identify issues of practice in their own context and [are] working to get enough information to really be able to advocate together for meaningful and sustainable change” (Judy, think aloud).

Additionally, Judy strove to create communities of learning with pre-service teachers she taught in university coursework as interns collaborated with her school-based colleagues for field-based clinical practice. The rich relationships she formed with students and mentor teachers, alike, promoted unique learning communities. She explained,

My relationships with the [specific inservice teachers who had been colleagues in my previous context] as well as my knowledge of their pedagogy enables me to give feedback and suggestions to my student teacher and to encourage my school-based colleagues to try things in a slightly different way. Engaging with my student teacher in a lively discussion about worksheet usage and ways to have more effective authentic assessments in her student teaching can enable me to enter into that conversation with her mentor who is my long-term friend [and a prolific user of worksheets]. Watching me interact

with my student teachers and seeing that we all have questions about practice and that we can think through alternative possibilities for practice together has encouraged my experienced school based colleague to begin to ask questions of her own. (Think aloud)

Together, Stacey, Nubia, and Judy had experienced the meaningful nature of collaboration and worked to create communities alongside pre-service and in-service teachers to support their own inquiries and the needs of their students and communities. Participants found that opportunities for collaborative questioning opened spaces for critical and supportive dialogue in which mentor, student teacher, and university supervisor could raise questions of practice and develop professional identities through reflection and changed action. Judy noted, "I think the effect of PDS is to build those long-term relationships and to give teachers a place to ask and inquire and be troubled by and find potential solutions" (Initial interview).

Integrating Academic Knowledge and Clinical Practice

As discussed in the previous theme, questions and conversations about practice aid novice and experienced teachers alike. Participants found these discussions were particularly relevant to student teachers and interns who were working to integrate teacher preparation coursework and the practical context of classrooms. This was most evident when the university boundary spanner was (a) both supervisor and instructor of the pre-service teacher's university content coursework and (b) able to make explicit connections between readings, research, and discussions and specific PDS classrooms or individual learners within those contexts. This theme was salient for each participant. For instance, in her initial interview, Judy noted that in her courses and in her work with pre-service teachers in field-based supervision,

We have extensive conversations about, well this is what [we] talked about in class, this is what I want to try to work towards, this is the context where I am, how can I bridge that?...What's it going to look like? and what are some strategies...that I can start implementing that are within the context of somebody else's space but that are moving towards the types of instruction that I believe in?

Nubia explained that helping candidates integrate course-based learning into classroom practice pivots on the construct of reflection. She had candidates engage with pupils in classroom-based collaborations and come back to class to debrief about the experience and how it connected to pedagogical and content area understandings. She stated, "It is reflection. Learning and reflecting. Learning and talking about what you learned and how do you apply it into your classroom" (Nubia, Think aloud). Judy agreed, saying "Most teachers don't have that person to talk to about things and process things with." Those conversations were critical to pre-service teachers' abilities to be able to draw upon university-based "learning" as they were "living it" in classroom placements.

At the point of our initial interview, Stacey had not had the opportunity to teach literacy and language courses in PDSs. She felt that this field-based coursework had real potential, saying,

I think the most valuable thing would be teaching some university courses at a PDS school. I'm hoping that's what our program will start to do [so that] our [candidates] are really working with young students and practicing what we're talking about...Sometimes they're not able to do that in their field placements right now. There's just not the flexibility.

Even though she did not have the benefit of working alongside interns in field-based coursework, Stacey worked to make her own teaching and planning evident to her students by

bringing in examples from her classroom experiences. She shared,

Luckily, I saved some examples of my students' work, mostly from my last year or maybe 4th, or 5th year of teaching. So I try to bring examples, student writings, or even...lesson plans that I had done, units that I put together. Not just as an example of...perfect great examples but also for them to kind of look at and challenge a little bit...[For example,] I showed them a unit I did in my first couple of years teaching and it was written by myself and other kindergarten teammates. So we looked at it from... how you would change it.

Additionally, she purposefully created engagements for candidates that specifically linked theory and working alongside of children to help them use what they had been learning. The primary experience of one of Stacey's courses was a tutoring experience and case study where pre-service teachers worked one-on-one with an English Learner at a local school. Stacey had candidates engaging with individual learners in formative assessment and instructional cycles in order to provide candidates an opportunity to implement theories and practices learned about in university coursework. She felt that this type of project was particularly helpful since "some of them have heard about some of [these strategies and assessments], even in all of their literacy courses they just haven't had the chance to really put them in to practice yet."

When Nubia was asked her opinion of PDS models as spaces for teacher preparation, she exclaimed,

I think it's fantastic because we are allowing the [pre-service] teachers to get in and get their hands dirty in a supportive environment. My teacher [candidates] are going in, they're tutoring the kids, and I am there...I am able to be there and if they have a question right on the spot, I am right there working with them whereas

when it's your first year teaching, you are alone most of your day and if you have got someone that comes in for a few minutes so be it, but you don't have someone there all the time helping you. [With these field-based courses in classrooms] I am there helping them plan their lessons, helping them look at how to plan for the kids, then we debrief after and talk about it. I am able to take them through the cycle of plan, assess, teach, reflect. The other thing too is that I am able to help them negotiate relationships with other members of the school. For example, I have one of my groups, three of the kids are in Reading Recovery. I take the [pre-service teachers] to the reading recovery teacher and say, "Hey, here is the reading recovery teacher that will be working with three of the kids that are in your small group, talk to her about what she sees and thinks." You know, "Here is the reading specialist, [who] works with this small group, talk with her, what does she see..." I am helping them see how to work with their colleagues, how to foster relationships. (Nubia, Think aloud)

Judy had pre-service teacher candidates conducting parent and student interviews, doing home visits when possible, and doing a photojournalistic essay where they considered resources of the community and out-of-school worlds of kids living there. She also had them shadowing middle and high school students across content courses in order to gain more of an understanding of funds of knowledge, experiences, and expertise of students and to put into practice the experience of collaborating with a range of stakeholders in order to honor the whole child. Nearly every experience crafted in the clinical teaching courses was intended to ensure that teachers had opportunity to put into practice all that they were taking from their coursework. Admittedly, this was easier for Judy since she was coordinating the program in

which she was supervising student teachers and had taught each of the classes to students she was supervising. Deep knowledge of coursework as well as context made this permeability more possible.

These urban teacher educators found that prior relationships with in-service teachers in the school enabled them to “navigate and negotiate access for pre-service teachers into classrooms in meaningful ways” (Judy, Think aloud). In this way the university faculty were able to help student teachers gain entry into classrooms in order to observe and try out a range of pedagogical practices and teacher identities. This literal spanning the boundaries these teacher educators did with pre-service teachers, working alongside them in coursework and in field placements, offered critical opportunities for reflective conversations in contextually situated spaces. This discourse aided pre-service teachers as they navigated the tensions between what they learned in courses and the ways they saw (or failed to see) those things enacted in their school-based experiences.

Challenging Partnerships to Become Increasingly Mutually Supportive and Beneficial

Evident throughout data was a belief from these boundary spanners that the relationship between the university and the schools should be a mutually engaging and mutually beneficial partnership that not only focused on the capacity to support teacher candidates in meaningful clinical experiences but also attended specifically to the needs of teachers and pupils in partner schools. Nubia, Stacey, and Judy each spoke to the concern that while they felt that PDS partnerships were constructed and enacted in ways that supported pre-service teachers, they were not as convinced about the manifestations of support offered to in-service teachers in those contexts. Judy shared,

As a teacher at a PDS school, I had limited meaningful engagement with university partners that might shape my practice and professionalism. My

transition to the university and the roles I have chosen for myself in the university setting have been shaped by my experiences in the school setting. During my first year in this context, I worked to gain an understanding of the ways that practicing teachers in PDS schools viewed our partnership and ways that they felt it could be one of reciprocity and mutuality. Based on my own experience as a teacher wanting a voice in the partnership and an understanding of the prevalence of those feelings, I was able to reconsider ways that we could consider the development of all of the stakeholders in the PDS relationship. (Written Debrief)

Stacey, in her initial interview, stated,

Classroom teachers should really be a part of it. It's not just about having interns and maybe teaching some courses there, but really trying to get them involved, as hard as that may be. I see how difficult it may be to get “buy in” from teachers initially and also to sustain the relationship because of all the time pressures and many other tasks that are a part of a teacher's daily life.

She posited that offering endorsements (such as ESOL), certification courses, or degrees to PDS teachers and holding classes in the school itself (which was beginning to occur), was an initial opportunity for the university to “show that you really are trying to offer them support. . . something real [and] tangible” (Initial interview).

Nubia's significant connection to the PDS after leaving her own classroom caused her to feel particularly troubled by the need for more meaningful collaboration on the part of the university in the lives and practices of teachers. She said,

Here is the thing, its PDS, professional development school. . . Where is the

teacher development? Let's start there...Let's just start with working with the teachers. You know, it's great for the university...Our class is being held there, we are going into the teacher's classrooms, our [pre-service] teachers are getting exposure to kids...It is more advantageous to the university than it is to the school. In order for [PDS] it to work, it's going to take a lot of commitment on the university's part 'cause the schools are...there, the kids are there...you can't expect the school to come to the university to foster that relationship, the university has to go to the school and I just don't see the commitment coming from the university. It's got to be more than [one faculty member going out to the school] once a week...I come in, I do my research and I leave...the university has got to become an everyday part of the school...it has to be a part of the school, not just "Oh, I hold a class there." What is the university giving to the school? How are they helping the school?...It has to be more than just one professor from the university coming to a whole school. It is a whole school...one person cannot do everything. (Nubia, Initial Interview)

Stacey, Judy, and Nubia felt it was particularly necessary for the university to be more fully contributing to the lives and work of teachers. They believed that it was the role of the university faculty and the partnership itself to serve as a resource to teachers and students in the school. Judy explained,

I feel strongly that the teachers who are already working in PDS schools need to benefit from their engagement in the partnership and that we cannot use their classrooms...to train teachers with our agenda. We must see teacher leaders as contributory and vital parts of the process and

ensure that they are actively involved in the strategic planning of our partnerships. My experience working as a classroom teacher in a PDS school has directly shaped my ways of being, working, and collaborating with mentor teachers. (Think aloud)

Participants believed this type of reciprocal development and commitment to the school by university faculty would strengthen in-service and pre-service teacher development in ways that would shape practice and support student learning. Nubia and Judy had significant opportunities to enact these types of engagements as much of their work was closely located in PDS contexts alongside in-service teachers for extended periods of time. By engaging in an intentional study of the needs and perceptions of teachers they were able to support teachers through professional development opportunities tailored to the needs the educators articulated and the problems of practice that teachers identified.

Nubia's field-based teaching offered an opportunity for her pre-service teachers to authentically give back to the school's teachers, families, and community by planning and leading a family literacy festival with support of classroom teachers. She coordinated this experience to provide opportunities for pre-service and in-service teachers alike to engage with parents and students around literacy events. Nubia felt strong relationships with parents were critical and wanted to promote that disposition in the pre-service teachers she supported while simultaneously helping kids, families, teachers, and the school. This event was one remarkable demonstration of collaboration by and on behalf of all of the stakeholders in the partnership.

Judy spoke generally about the possibilities and promise of an honoring partnership where the university offered meaningful support to practicing teachers. In her initial interview, Judy contended

It's really important that we go in and we build those relationships with individual teachers and with groups

of teachers...[Change] stems from having teachers sitting down together and problematizing and doing inquiry and figuring out what is causing the issues and how they can make a change...I don't think we can do that without building a relationship and without having the space for inquiries and really considering the needs and feelings, the experiences, questions, and ponderings of the teachers who we're working with... Long-term commitment and relationship building is necessary if we are to create a context where teachers feel safe enough to ask for support, to engage in inquiry, and to consider aspects of practice. If we say we are committed to the development of our in-service teacher partners, I think that we have the obligation to take these factors seriously.

Judy argued that while there is great potential in partnerships between universities and P-12 schools, failure to fully and authentically support practicing teachers impeded this possibility. She warned,

If we don't build the relationships and create the spaces where we [university faculty] can be a resource to [in-service teachers], then our teachers are not going to go in and have the type of pre-service experiences they need to have. [Student teachers are] going to go in and have frustrated cooperating teachers to whom this is just another thing, who don't feel like they're going to get anything out of this and who are already so downtrodden because of the general circumstances of the system. So this is a great ideological potentiality. It's just the challenge from really moving from what it could be to what it should be. What it is to what it should be. That disconnect is

what I feel that we really need to work on, and I'm trying. (Initial Interview)

The challenge to meaningfully account for and attend to the needs of all stakeholders of the partnership is one that remains salient. Boundary spanners whose perspectives, orientations, dispositions, and commitments are shaped by each context are in unique positions to acknowledge those tensions and to advocate for and work to enact such mutually beneficial practices.

Summary

This study adds a critical perspective on the promise and possibility of school-university partnerships by extending our construct of boundary spanners. Specifically, the findings illustrate ways individuals who have traversed the P-12 and university boundaries can act as change agents in and across both contexts. Such educators are able to negotiate relationships, support inquiry, develop collaborative processes for reflection, and re-imagine the partnership between the too often disparate worlds of the university and the public school in ways that shape the pedagogy, disposition, and practices of teachers and students. By enacting the call for PDS relationships to simultaneously renew and support faculties at both sites (NCATE, 2001; Neapolitan & Tunks, 2009), participants demonstrated their commitment to developing and supporting in-service teachers and strengthening professional educators in both settings (Howey & Zimpher, 2006). Through integration of coursework and clinical practice, participants built and reinforced conceptual links between university-based learning and classroom-based engagements (NCATE, 2001; Snow et al., 1998), a critical but difficult-to-implement emphasis in teacher preparation and development. These boundary spanners aided university- and school-based stakeholders by critiquing the partnership for evidence of truly valuing and benefiting school-based

partners. Their input was particularly valuable due to the commitment and history that provided them with perspectives from, commitments to, and relationships with both partners (Collay, 1995; Many et al., 2011; Many et al., 2012; Miller, 2008; Sanheltz & Finan, 1990; Stevens, 1999).

The sample size reflects the rare positionality of these educators as boundary spanners. This work is not intended to suggest that there is a generalizable experience of all boundary spanners across collaborations and context. Rather, we have found that the very specificity of the contexts and spaces that boundary spanners inhabit shapes their experiences, perspectives, capacities, and possibilities (Many et al., 2012). The experiences of these boundary spanning teacher educators do, however, provide a sociocultural insight into the value of drawing on individuals who can critique and create from a nuanced and intentional perspective of being and relating in both contexts.

These participants—in their attitudes, dispositions, and actions—reframed boundaries, facilitated mutual understanding, and supported instruction in ways that extended traditional relations. Through their leadership, these university-based boundary spanners have been able to act as agents of change in the teaching, learning, and development of novice and experienced teachers. This study calls into question some taken for granted and unexamined ways universities and schools engage and provides insight into a more liberating, compassionate, and responsive stance toward school-based partners. ^{SUP}

References

- Aldridge, H., & Herker, D. (1977). Boundary spanning roles and organizational structure. *The Academy of Management Review*, 2, 217–230.
- American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. (2010). *Reforming teacher education: The critical clinical component*. Washington, DC: AACTE.
- Ariail, M., Dooley, C. M., Swars, S., & Smith, L. (2011). Possibilities for clinical teacher education: Four stories of field-based courses taught at professional development school sites. In C. Bohan, & J. E. Many (Eds.), *Clinical teacher education: Reflections from an urban professional development school network*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Bogdan, C. R., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Bohan, C. H., & Many, J. (Eds.). (2011). *Clinical teacher education: Reflections from an urban professional development school network*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Breault, D. A., & Breault, R. (2010). Partnerships for preparing leaders: What can we learn from PDS research? *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 13, 437–454.
- Buxton, C. A., Carlone, H. B., & Carlone, D. (2005). Boundary spanners as bridges of student and school discourses in an urban science and mathematics high school. *School Science and Mathematics*, 105, 302–312.
- Collay, M. (1995). Creating a common ground: The facilitator's role in creating school-university partnerships. In H. G. Petrie (Ed.), *Professionalism, partnership, and power: Building professional development schools* (pp. 145–157). New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. New York, NY: Aldine.
- Honig, M. I. (2006). Street-level bureaucracy revisited: Frontline district central-office administrators as boundary spanners in education policy implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 28, 357–383.
- Howrey, K. R., & Zimpher, N. L. (2006). *Boundary spanners: A key to success in urban p-16 university-school partnerships*. New York, NY: American Association of State Colleges and Universities.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Many, J., Fisher, T., Taylor, D., & Benson, G. (2011). The work and insights of Professional Development School Boundary Spanners. In C. Haeussler Bohan, & J. Many. (Eds.), *Clinical teacher education: Reflections from an urban professional development school network*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Many, J., Fisher, T., Ogletree, S., & Taylor, D. (2012). Crisscrossing the university and public school contexts as professional development school boundary spanners. *Issues in Teacher Education*.

- Miller, P. M. (2008). Examining the work of boundary spanning leaders in community contexts. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 11, 353-377.
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2001). *Standards for professional development schools*. Washington, DC: NCATE
- Neapolitan, J. E., & Tunks, J. L. (2009). Exploring the "development" in professional development school research. *Action in Teacher Education*, 31(3), 3-10.
- Sandholtz, J., & Finan, E. (1990). Blurring the boundaries to promote school/university partnerships. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 49, 13-25.
- Scarino, A. (2005). Introspection and retrospection as windows on teacher knowledge, values, and ethical dispositions. In D. J. Tedick (Ed.), *Second language teacher education: International perspectives* (pp. 33-52). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Shroyer, G., Yahnke, S., & Heller, M. F. (2007). Introduction: Collaborative reconstruction and simultaneous renewal: The impact of professional development schools. *Journal of Educational Research*, 100(4), 195-196.
- Snow, C., Griffin, P., & Burns, M. S. (Eds.). (2005). *Knowledge to support the teaching of reading: Preparing teachers for a changing world*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Stevens, D. D. (1999). The ideal, real, and surreal in school-university partnerships: Reflections of a boundary spanner. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 15, 287-299.
- White, J., & Dozier, D. M. (1992). Public relations and management decision making. In J. E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 91-108). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.



Teresa Fisher focuses her research on collaborations with and between novice teachers working in urban classrooms in order to support their development and encourage their vocational commitment.

Joyce Many is a professor at Georgia State University. Her recent research explores the effectiveness of teacher education programs and factors impacting candidate performance and subsequent retention in the classroom.